



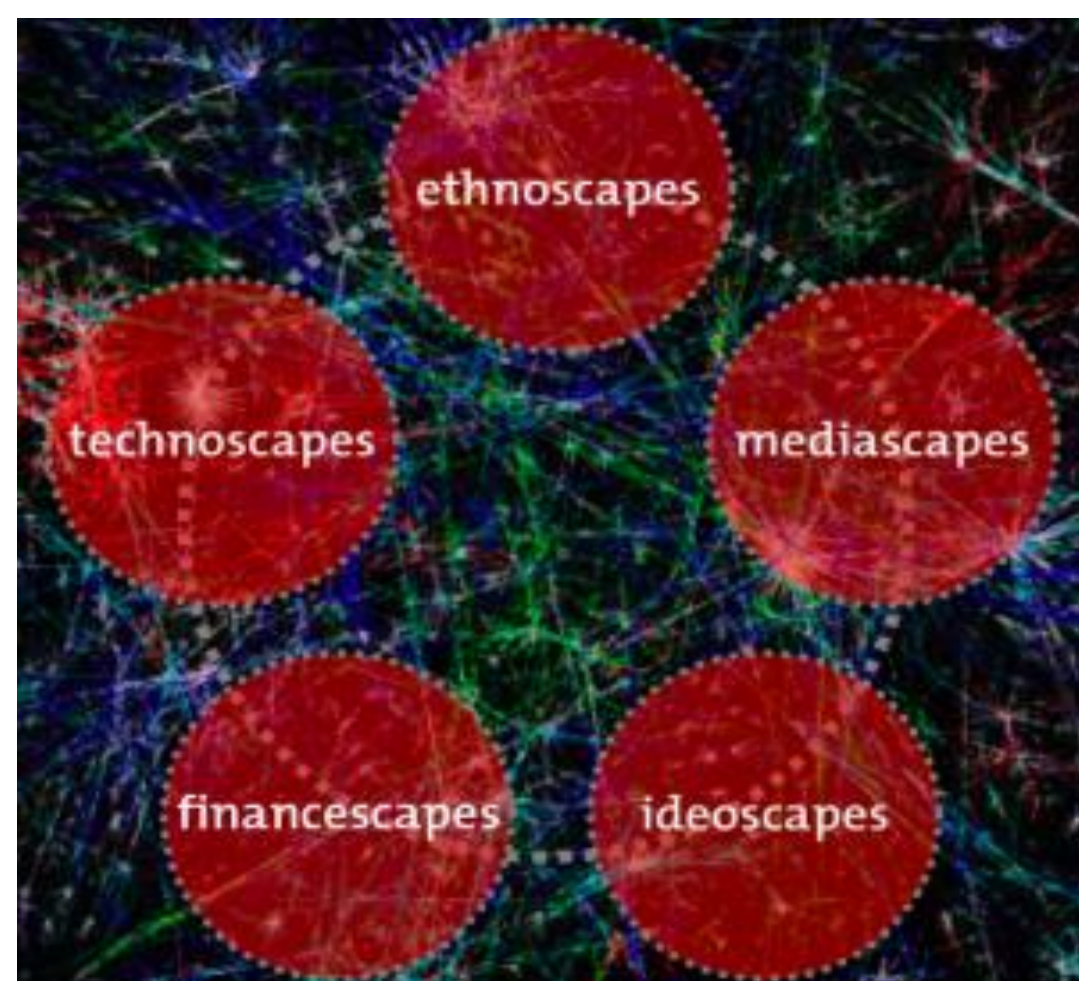
Radicalism, Reform and Migration: The Transformations of Shaykh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr

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Abstract:

This paper posits that the late Shi'i clerical activist Shaykh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr of Saudi Arabia represented a culmination of the nexus of regional political competitions, transnational religious knowledge networks, inter-generational tensions in contemporary Shi'ism, and radical post-revolutionary Shi'i politics. Thus, a more rigorous examination of his life holds relevance as a corrective to monolithic historiographies of the Saudi Shi'a as a united community. Applying social movement theory and framing him within the processes of Globalization shows the complex intersection of religion and politics within a marginalized religio-political community.

Appadurai's Dimensions of Global Cultural Flows

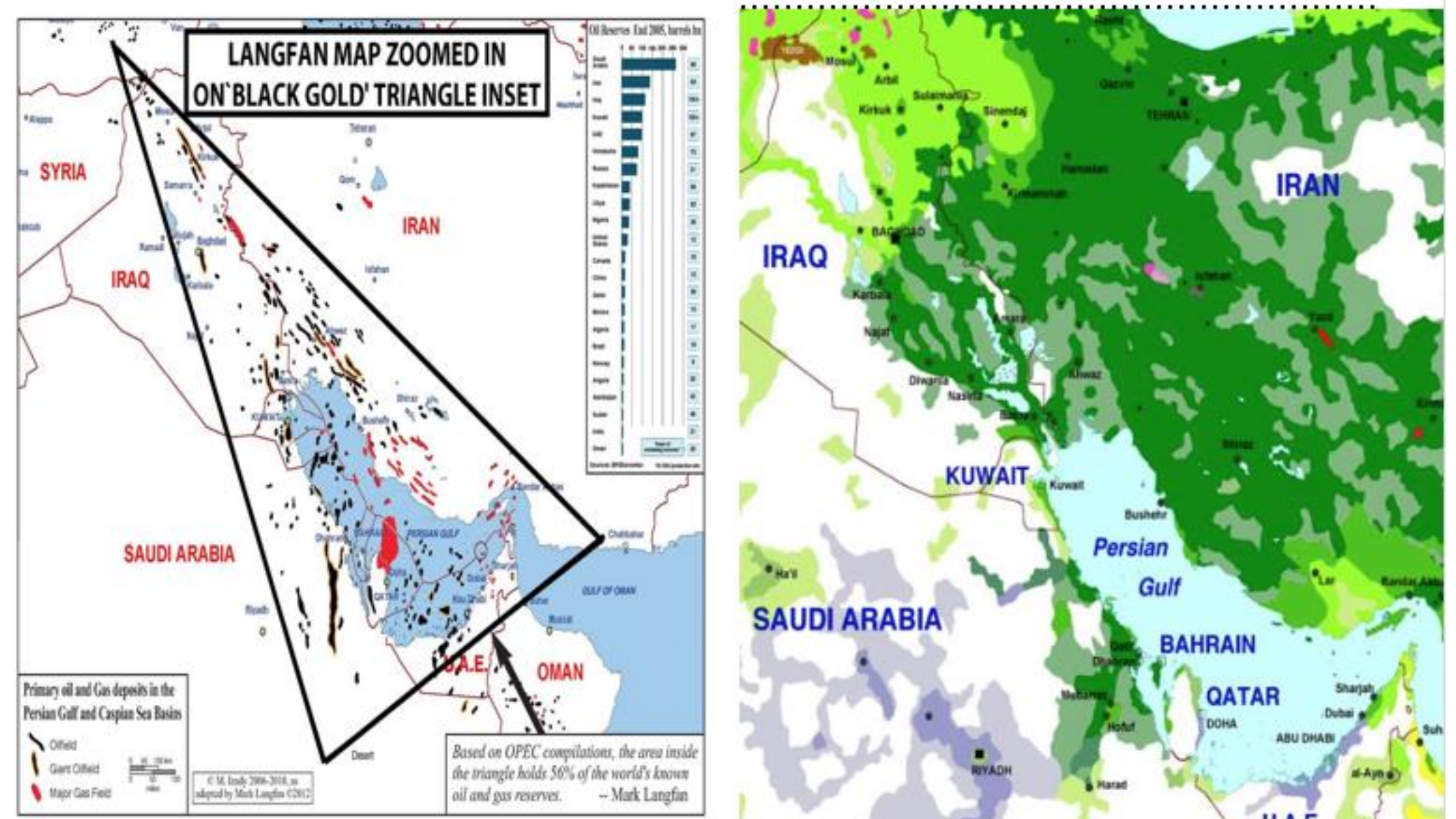


Four main areas of inquiry:

- **Regional Political Competitions**
(Saudi Arabia-Iran geopolitical competition)
- **Transnational Religious Knowledge Networks**
(Hawzat religious network and al-Nimr)
- **Intergenerational tensions in Shi'ism**
(Competition btw. older and younger leaders)
- **Radical post-revolutionary Shi'i politics**
(Hizbullah al-Hijaz; Iranian support for Saudi Shi'i groups)



The Black Gold Triangle and Sunni/Shi'a Minorities



Key Terms and Theoretical Frameworks:

Khums: annual Shi'i religious tithe equaling one-fifth of wealth of believer after the deduction of expenses = net worth

Hawza: a Shi'ite Muslim socio-religious educational network made up of ayatollahs and their students

Globalization's 5 Dimensions: Developed by Arjun Appadurai as the five dimensions of global cultural flow, which he termed: (a) ethnoscapes; (b) mediascapes; (c) technoscapes; (d) financescapes; and (e) ideoscapes. The interaction of these five dimensions represents certain fundamental disjunctures between economy, culture and politics.

Transnational social movements (TSMs): a diverse (transnational) collection of state and non-state actors, using an action template to coordinate efforts and pursue common goals

Framing: Shared meanings and definitions that people bring to their situation

Preliminary Conclusions:

- Nimr is representative of emerging Saudi Shi'i voice of dissent, particularly among youth, which in turn is emblematic of growing competition in observant 'Usuli Twelver Shi'i communities between older and younger leaders
- Nimr used ideas of MLK and invoked the UN Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principles to defend a) right of Saudi Shi'a to protest, and b) right of Saudi Shi'a to international protection.
- Nimr's history of study with the Iranian hawzat and interaction with their networks is the basis for the argument that Nimr is a representative of Iran. However, no conclusive evidence of his loyalty to Iran is available at present.
- Saudi Arabia may or may not have been cognizant of said nuance; regardless of whether Saudi authorities truly believed Nimr was an Iranian agent, portrayal of such and his execution should be seen as a way for Saudi government to severely impair the ability of Shi'i youth to organize and unify.